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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PRESENTS CREDENTIALS

¶1. (U) The Ambassador presented his credentials on January 11 to the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, becoming the first U.S. ambassador to Tripoli since 1972. In a brief, simple ceremony at the offices of the General People's Congress, Secretary of the General People's Congress Muftah Kaybah received the Ambassador's credentials. He was accompanied by: Secretary of the General People's Congress for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation Suleiman Shahumi (SFRC Chair-equivalent); MFA Secretary for Arab Affairs Muhammad Taher Siala (A/S-equivalent), MFA Protocol Head of Privileges and Immunities al-Mahdi al-Ouwdi; and MFA Director of the Americas Department Muhammad Matari (DAS-equivalent).

¶2. (U) In brief remarks, the Ambassador underscored how far relations had evolved in the past five years, stressing that implementation of the U.S.-Libya claims compensation agreement and the recent exchange of ambassadors (Libyan Ambassador Ali Aujali presented his credentials at the White House on January 8) marked a turning of the page on the contretemps of the past. The U.S. was keen to deepen the range of bilateral engagement, to include building a new embassy compound, providing full visa services to Libyan applicants, expanding commercial ties, increasing the number of Libyan students studying in the U.S., re-establishing people-to-people ties that had lapsed since the 1970's, and exploring more robust military-to-military engagement. The U.S. would also engage the Libyan government on key issues of principle, such as human rights, as it does with all nations with whom it enjoys diplomatic relations.

¶3. (U) Secretary Kaybah offered remarks welcoming the Ambassador's arrival and attendant elevation of bilateral diplomatic representation, and stressing Libya's desire to work cooperatively with the U.S. The strategic and historic decision of Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi to renounce terrorism and abandon WMD programs had facilitated the historic process of U.S.-Libya re-engagement, he said. He emphasized that Libya's record of participation in various international bodies focused on human rights was long and distinguished, and cautioned the U.S. and others to remain mindful of the fact that human rights should be interpreted in each country's "unique historical and cultural context".

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